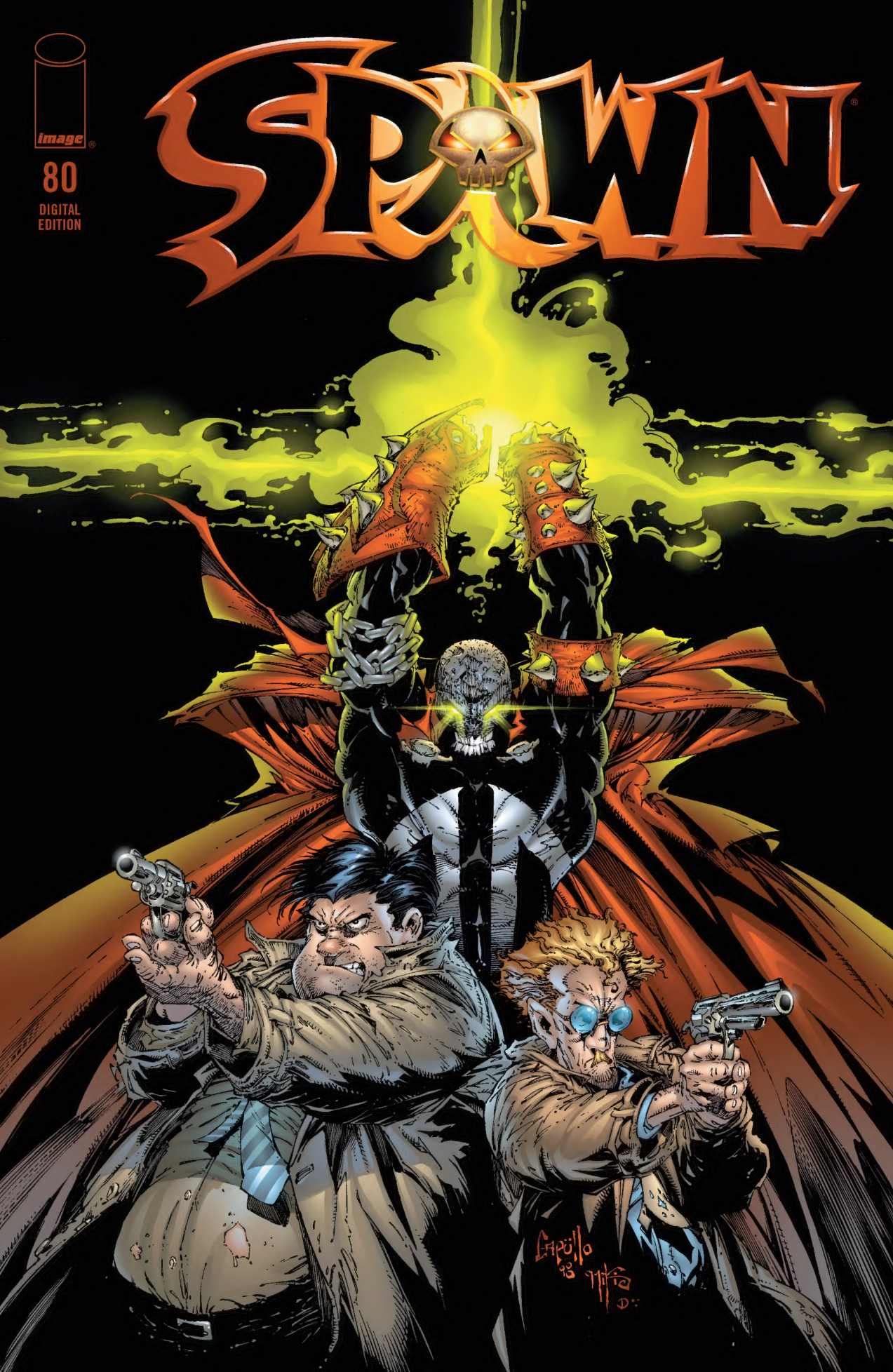




80

DIGITAL
EDITION

SPAWN



Art by
Mike Deodato
Colors by
Gerry Albrecht

TODD MCFARLANE AND IMAGE COMICS PRESENTS...

THE CLEANSING



PLOT

Todd McFarlane
Brian Holguin

STORY

Brian Holguin

PENCILS

Greg Capullo

INKS

Danny Miki

COPY EDITOR and LETTERING

Tom Orzechowski

COLOR

Brian Haberlin
Dan Kemp

COVER ART

Greg Capullo
Danny Miki

president of entertainment
TERRY FITZGERALD

executive director for Image Comics
LARRY MARDER

executive director for publishing
BEAU SMITH

managing editor
TED ADAMS

editorial coordinator
MELANIE SIMMONS

art director
BRENT ASHE

designers
JOHN GALLAGHER
BOYD WILLIAMS

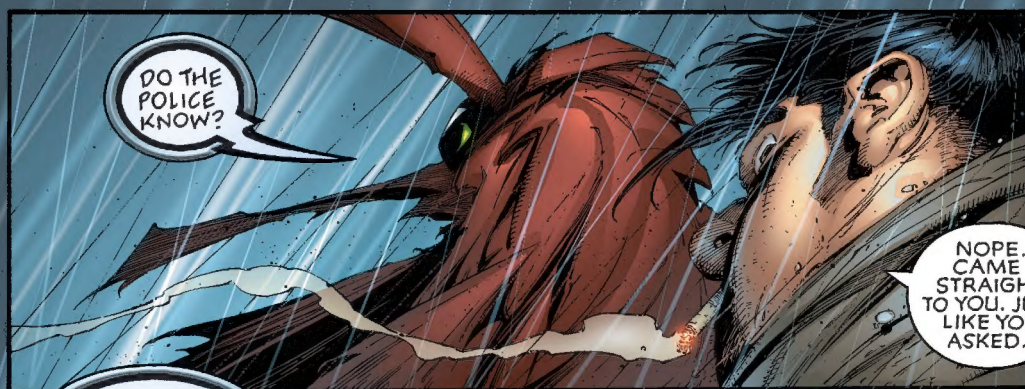
SPAWN 79 Summary

Detective Silbert interrogates Bobby at police headquarters about his involvement in the recent alley murders. Bobby makes his one phone call to Dr. Sarah Frost and later she and Sam discuss his options. Meanwhile, Spawn "feels" the latest victim's death and vows to catch the killer of his people. Later, Sam finds Bobby almost dead near Sarah's clinic. He breaks into the clinic to get help and finds a shrine of sorts from the killer relating to his victims.

DEDICATED TO

my favorite person - Amy Gittleman





DO THE
POLICE
KNOW?

NOPE.
CAME
STRAIGHT
TO YOU. JUST
LIKE YOU
ASKED.

GOOD. GIVE
ME HALF AN
HOUR, THEN CALL
THE COPS.



DO YOU
MIND IF
WE ASK
WHY?



BECAUSE
I GODDAMN
SAID SO,
THAT'S
WHY.



ASS-
WIPE.

A CITY IS A LOT
LIKE A PERSON,
IF YOU THINK
ABOUT IT...

IT LIVES AND BREATHES AND GROWS. IT HAS ITS OWN UNIQUE ANATOMY. ITS OWN CHARMS AND IDIOSYNCRASIES.

BY ITS VERY NATURE, IT MUST KILL AND DEVOUR IN ORDER TO SURVIVE.

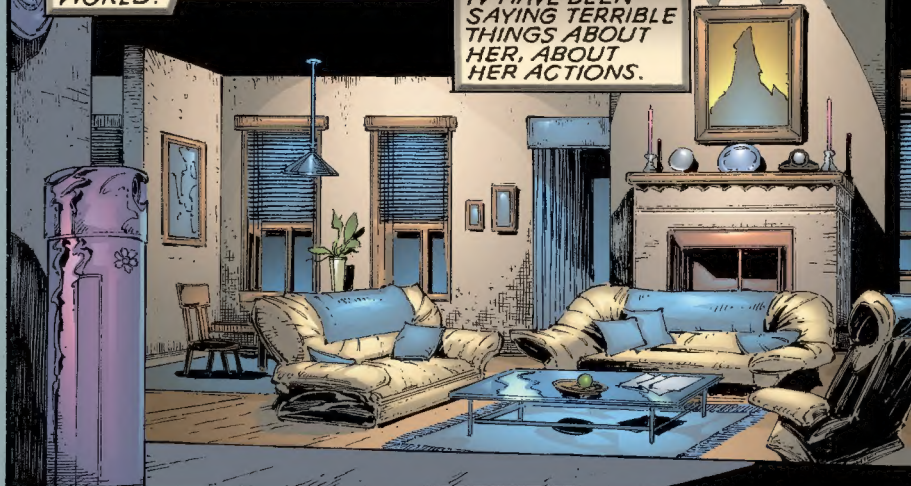
SOMETIMES IT IS FACED BY MALIGNANCIES. PARASITES. CANCERS.

SOME CAN BE TREATED. OR CONTAINED.

BUT OTHERS MUST BE ELIMINATED. ERADICATED FROM THE HOST SO THAT THE BETTER, MORE DESERVING ORGANS MAY THRIVE. THEY MUST BE CLEANSED.

THE KILLER KNOWS THIS, DEEP IN HER HEART. UNDERSTANDS IT AT A PRIMAL LEVEL. IT IS THE ONLY WAY TO BUILD A BETTER, MORE PRISTINE WORLD.

THE MEN ON THE TV HAVE BEEN SAYING TERRIBLE THINGS ABOUT HER, ABOUT HER ACTIONS.



THEY TOSS AROUND UGLY WORDS LIKE "MURDER" AND "SOCIOPATH."

THEY DON'T UNDERSTAND. IT IS THANKLESS WORK. COLD, CLINICAL AND NECESSARY.

BUT SHE DOESN'T DO IT FOR UNDERSTANDING OR FOR RECOGNITION.

SHE DOES IT BECAUSE NO ONE ELSE WILL.

DR. SARAH FROST EMERGES FROM THE SHOWER, HER SEVENTH OF THE DAY. SHE FEELS RENEWED, ALMOST REBORN.

SHE DRINKS IN THE FILTERED, RAREFIED AIR. IT IS FREE FROM THE TAINTS OF THE CITY. THE TOXIC GRIME THAT FILLS ITS SKIES, THE SICKENING SCENT OF OTHER PEOPLE.

IT IS ONLY AT THESE MOMENTS SHE FEELS TRULY SAFE.

TRULY COMFORTABLE INSIDE HER SKIN.

SHE FEELS ALIVE AND RADIANT BENEATH THE WARM GLOW OF HALOGEN LIGHTS.

Huh?

THAT COMFORT WILL PROVE SHORT-LIVED.

EEEE!
GET OFF ME!



No! GET OFF!
GET OFF!

THIS IS IMPOSSIBLE,
SHE THINKS. HER
SAFE, ANTISEPTIC
LITTLE WORLD HAS
BEEN BREACHED.

LIGHTNING
FLASHES AND
THE WORLD
TURNS DARK.


No! No!
GET OFF!
WHERE
ARE THEY
COMING
FROM?

DR. FROST
PANICS.
HER HEART
POUNDING.

SHE FEELS
SICK.
VIOLATED.

SHE STUMBLES IN THE DARKNESS
AND FALLS TO THE GROUND.
AROUND HER SHE HEARS THE
NAUSEATING SOUND OF HUNDREDS
OF TINY LEGS SKITTERING
ALL ABOUT HER.

No! No!
STOP IT!
NO!



ANOTHER FLASH OF
LIGHTNING ILLUMINATES
THE ROOM AND SHE
REALIZES SHE IS NOT
ALONE. THERE IS SOME-
ONE THERE, WATCHING.

FROM SOMEWHERE
NEAR, SHE HEARS THE
RATTLE OF CHAINS,
THE FLUTTERING OF
HEAVY CLOTH.

HER PUPILS DILATE,
ADJUSTING TO THE
DARK, AND THEN
SHE SEES...

**SARAH
FROST!**
IT'S TIME TO
ANSWER
FOR YOUR
CRIMES!



CHRIST. WHAT DO YOU THINK HE'S DOING IN THERE? I DON'T LIKE THE STINK OF THIS. AND WHAT WAS THAT CRAP? "COS I SAID SO."

DEAL OR NO DEAL, HE DON'T TALK TO US LIKE THAT. BETTER GET THAT STRAIGHT.



YES, SIR. I WAS QUITE IMPRESSED BY THE WAY YOU STOOD UP TO HIM. VERY BRAVE.

JEEZ, TWITCH! WHAT'S EATING YOU? THIS IS HARD ENOUGH WITHOUT YOU TAKING SHOTS AT ME.



FORGIVE ME, SIR. GALLOWS HUMOR, I SUPPOSE.

YEAH. OKAY. DON'T WORRY 'BOUT IT.

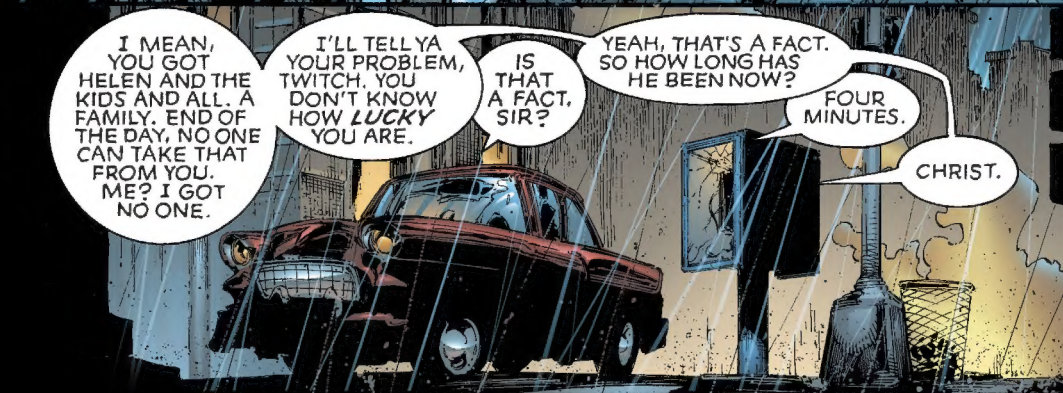


Sigh IT'S JUST... SHE WAS NICE TO ME, Y'KNOW? TREATED ME LIKE I WASN'T JUST SOME MOOK. THAT HASN'T HAPPENED MUCH IN MY LIFE.

JUST MY LUCK SHE TURNS OUT TO BE A SPREE-KILLING PSYCHO.

Hmm. IT'S ALWAYS SOMETHING, ISN'T IT?

KNOCK IT OFF. WHEN'D YOU DECIDE YOU HAD A SENSE OF HUMOR ANYWAY? HUH? GUYS LIKE YOU... YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE.



I MEAN, YOU GOT HELEN AND THE KIDS AND ALL. A FAMILY. END OF THE DAY, NO ONE CAN TAKE THAT FROM YOU. ME? I GOT NO ONE.


I'LL TELL YA YOUR PROBLEM, TWITCH. YOU DON'T KNOW HOW LUCKY YOU ARE.

IS THAT A FACT, SIR?

YEAH, THAT'S A FACT. SO HOW LONG HAS HE BEEN NOW?

FOUR MINUTES.

CHRIST.



WHO-
WHO ARE
YOU? WHAT
DO YOU
WANT
WITH ME?

TELL
ME WHY,
SARAH.
WHY DID
YOU DO
IT?

I DON'T
KNOW WHAT
YOU'RE TALKING
ABOUT. GET
AWAY FROM ME!
SOMEBODY

HELLP!

SHOUT
ALL YOU WANT.
NO ONE'S
COMING TO
HELP YOU. YOU
CAN'T RUN
FROM ME.



WHAT
ARE
YOU--

AAAAH!

NO.
PLEASE.
LEAVE
ME
ALONE!

FLOODGATES OPEN IN SARAH
FROST'S MIND, DROWNING
HER PSYCHE IN WAVES OF
DEEP CRIMSON.

THE GHOSTS HAVE
COME BACK TO TAKE
THEIR REVENGE.

FIVE HOMELESS
PERSONS,
GRUESOMELY
MURDERED,
MUTILATED, BY
HER HAND.

SHE REMEMBERS THE
DAY IT ALL BECAME
CLEAR TO HER. SHE HAD
TRIED SO HARD TO HELP
THEM, BUT SO MANY HAD
REFUSED THAT HELP.

SUCH PERSONS DON'T
DESERVE TO LIVE, DON'T
DESERVE TO SHARE THE
SAME AIR AND SUNLIGHT
AS THE REST OF US.

AND THEN THE VOICES
CAME. THEY TOLD HER
SHE WAS RIGHT. THAT
IT WAS UP TO HER TO
CHANGE THINGS. THAT
IT WAS THE ONLY
SANE THING TO DO.

THE SCREAMS
OF HER
VICTIMS ECHO
IN HER EARS,
THEIR PAIN
AND SUFFER-
ING QUAKE
THROUGH
HER BONES.

HER BODY
WRACKS AND
CONVULSES
WITH THEIR
AGONY.

HOW DOES IT FEEL, SARAH? TO BE SO HELPLESS. TO KNOW THAT NO ONE IS COMING TO YOUR RESCUE...

PLEASE... PLEASE... STOP...

...TO KNOW YOUR PATHETIC LIFE IS AT AN END...

NO!

AAARGGGH!

WE'RE NOT GOING TO STOP.

HOW DOES IT FEEL, SARAH? TO BE SO HELPLESS. TO KNOW THAT NO ONE IS COMING TO YOUR RESCUE...

PLEASE... PLEASE... STOP...

...TO KNOW YOUR PATHETIC LIFE IS AT AN END...

NO!

AAARGGGH!

WE'RE NOT GOING TO STOP.

HOW DOES IT FEEL, SARAH? TO BE SO HELPLESS. TO KNOW THAT NO ONE IS COMING TO YOUR RESCUE...

PLEASE... PLEASE... STOP...

...TO KNOW YOUR PATHETIC LIFE IS AT AN END...

NO!

AAARGGGH!

WE'RE NOT GOING TO STOP.

HOW DOES IT FEEL, SARAH? TO BE SO HELPLESS. TO KNOW THAT NO ONE IS COMING TO YOUR RESCUE...

PLEASE... PLEASE... STOP...

...TO KNOW YOUR PATHETIC LIFE IS AT AN END...

NO!

AAARGGGH!

WE'RE NOT GOING TO STOP.

HOW DOES IT FEEL, SARAH? TO BE SO HELPLESS. TO KNOW THAT NO ONE IS COMING TO YOUR RESCUE...

PLEASE... PLEASE... STOP...

...TO KNOW YOUR PATHETIC LIFE IS AT AN END...

NO!

AAARGGGH!

WE'RE NOT GOING TO STOP.

HOW DOES IT FEEL, SARAH? TO BE SO HELPLESS. TO KNOW THAT NO ONE IS COMING TO YOUR RESCUE...

PLEASE... PLEASE... STOP...

...TO KNOW YOUR PATHETIC LIFE IS AT AN END...

NO!

AAARGGGH!

WE'RE NOT GOING TO STOP.

THREE NIGHTS
AGO... THE LAST
VICTIM...
BARELY MORE
THAN A CHILD...

SHE WOULD HAVE TO PAY.

I'VE BEEN WORRIED
ABOUT YOU. IT'S KEEP-
ING ME UP NIGHTS.

HER NAME WAS
FAWN. SARAH
HAD TRIED HARD
TO GET HER OFF
THE STREET. SHE
HAD INVESTED
HOURS IN HELP-
ING THIS GIRL,
ALL FOR NOTHING.

JUST
SOMEWHERE
WE CAN TALK.
DON'T WORRY.
IT'LL ALL BE OKAY
SOON. ARE YOU
HUNGRY?

WHERE
ARE WE
GOING?

SARAH DROVE HER TO AN
OLD WAREHOUSE AND
SHOWED HER THE PENALTY
FOR HER ACTIONS.

YOU STUPID,
UNGRATEFUL
LITTLE BITCH!

WHAT?!
WHAT
ARE YOU
DOING?!

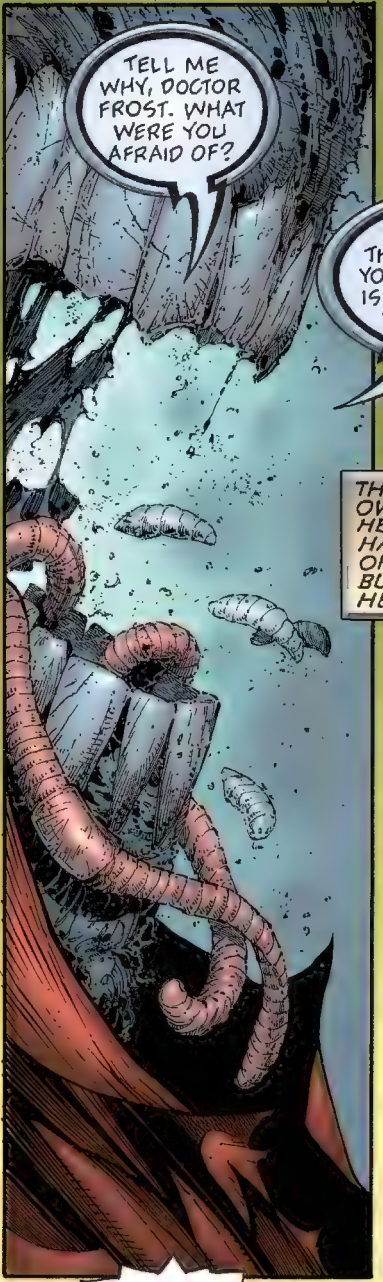
AAH!
LET GO!

THE LITTLE
BRAT ACTUAL-
LY LOOKED
SURPRISED.
BETRAYED.
DIDN'T SHE
REALIZE SHE
HAD BROUGHT
IT ALL ON
HERSELF?

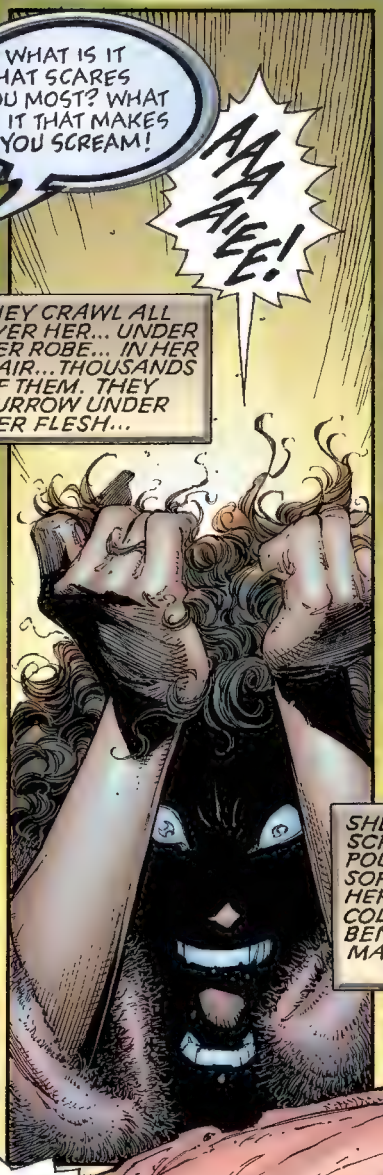
THE GIRL STRUGGLED, TRIED
TO ESCAPE. BUT SHE NEVER
STOOD A CHANCE.

SARAH CUT FAWN'S THROAT AND
WATCHED HER DIE. LISTENED AS
THE GIRL'S LAST, PATHETIC CRIES
FOR MERCY GURGLD WEAKLY
FROM HER SEVERED THROAT.

AND THEN SHE EXTRACTED FAWN'S
STILL-BEATING HEART AS A
TROPHY. AND AS A WARNING TO
OTHERS: CHANGE OR DIE.



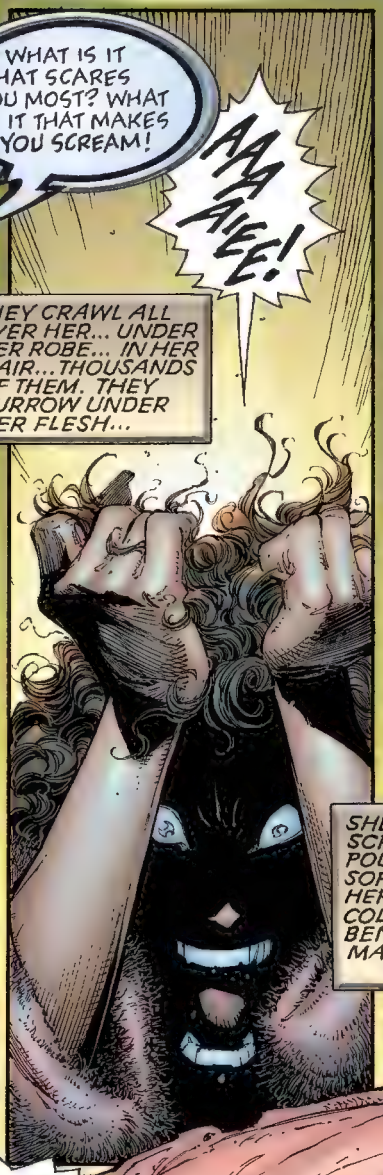
TELL ME
WHY, DOCTOR
FROST. WHAT
WERE YOU
AFRAID OF?



WHAT IS IT
THAT SCARES
YOU MOST? WHAT
IS IT THAT MAKES
YOU SCREAM!

AA
AEE!

THEY CRAWL ALL
OVER HER... UNDER
HER ROBE... IN HER
HAIR... THOUSANDS
OF THEM. THEY
BURROW UNDER
HER FLESH...



SHE SLAPS AND
SCRATCHES AND
POUNDS AT THEM,
SOFT LAYERS OF
HER OWN FLESH
COLLECTING
BENEATH HER
MANICURED
NAILS...

GET 'EM
OFF! GET
'EM OFF
ME!

PLEASE!
PLEASE
STOP
IT!

AS SARAH
FROST
EXPERIENCES
HER BLACKEST
NIGHTMARE
BROUGHT TO
LIFE SOME-
THING IN HER
MIND
SWITCHES
OVER...



I'M
BEGGING
YOU,

**STOP
IT!**

SHUT UP!
YOU ARE NOT
ALLOWED
TO BEG!

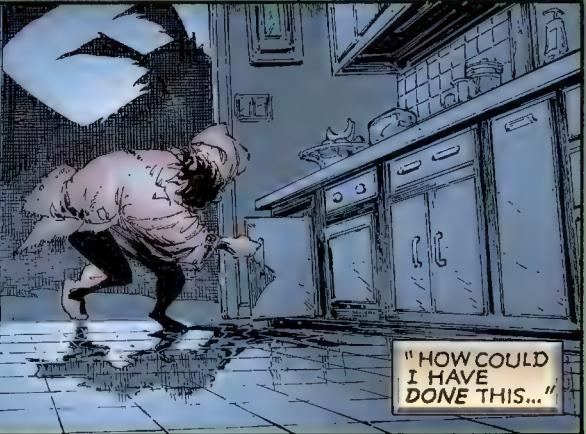
IT WAS HER ALL ALONG. SHE
SEES THAT NOW. THE VOICES
ONLY TOLD HER WHAT SHE
WANTED TO HEAR.

AND SOMEHOW, SHE
KNOWS THEY'RE NOW
LAUGHING AT HER.


THE INSECTS CONTINUE TO
MULTIPLY, COVERING EVERY
INCH OF HER FLESH.

BILE RISES IN HER THROAT... FEAR
PUSHES HER TO THE BRINK OF MADNESS...

"HOW COULD THIS BE
HAPPENING?" SHE
THINKS... "I WAS A
GOOD PERSON...
HOW COULD I..."



"HOW COULD
I HAVE
DONE THIS..."



HER KITCHEN PANTRY HOLDS
AN ARSENAL OF CLEANING
SUPPLIES. ONE CAN NEVER
BE TOO CAREFUL...

SHE EMPTIES CAN
AFTER CAN OF
PESTICIDE, BUT THEY
KEEP COMING...

THE NOXIOUS
SPRAY SEARS
HER EYES,
SEEPS INTO
HER OPEN
WOUNDS,
STINGING
AND
BURNING
HER
TENDER
FLESH...

UUGGHN...

HER MOUTH
IS CLOGGED
WITH VERMIN...
HER TONGUE
WEIGHTED
DOWN BY
COUNTLESS
INSECTS...

SHE CAN BARELY
SEE NOW... EYE-
LIDS SWOLLEN,
HER VISION
BLOCKED BY
THIS CREEPING
VEIL OF
PESTILENCE...

SHE MAKES
ONE LAST
PANICKED
GESTURE,
HOPING FOR
MERCY... FOR
FORGIVENESS...

SHE
RECEIVES
NEITHER.



FORTY-FIVE MINUTES LATER:

HEY, HEY! HERE'S THE BOYS OF THE HOUR...

HEYA, SILBERT.

I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU CLOWNS DID IT, BUT YOU ACTUALLY MANAGED TO SOLVE A REAL CASE. THANKS FOR MAKING US LOOK BAD.

NO DOUBT ABOUT IT. SHE HAD FILES ON ALL THE VICTIMS, WE MATCHED THE TYPEWRITER, EVEN FOUND SOME WHACKED-OUT JOURNALS OF HERS.

MOST ORGANIZED KILLER I EVER SEEN. FREAKY STUFF, MAN. THIS LITTLE LADY WAS ONE CERTIFIED, U.S.D.A.-SELECT, GRADE-"A" NUT-JOB.

JUST FOLLOWED MY GUT, SO SHE REALLY WAS THE KILLER?



HEY, TWITCHIE! YOU DOIN', MAN? GOOD TO SEE YOU BACK ON YOUR FEET.

MARX, ANDREWS. HOW'VE YOU BEEN?

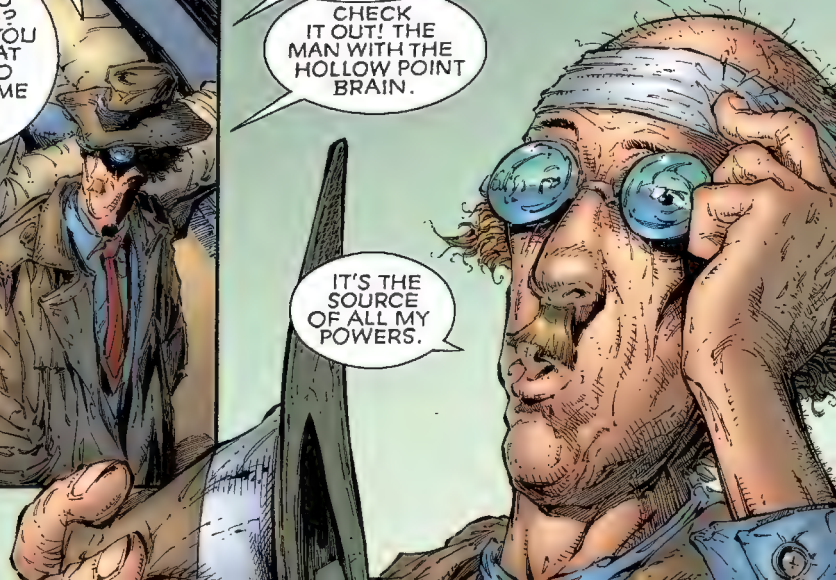
OKAY. HOW YOU FEELING? THEY LET YOU KEEP THAT BULLET TO TAKE HOME WITH YOU?

IN A MANNER OF SPEAKING. IT'S RIGHT WHERE THEY LEFT IT, GENTLEMEN.

WHOA! YOU'RE KIDDIN' ME!

CHECK IT OUT! THE MAN WITH THE HOLLOW POINT BRAIN.

IT'S THE SOURCE OF ALL MY POWERS.



Tap Tap



Heh!
GOOD
ONE,
TWITCH.

COME ON,
KIDS. LET'S
GO MEET OUR
LOVELY
HOSTESS.

EXCUSE
ME, GENTLE-
MEN.



HERE
SHE IS.
WHAT A
BEAUT,
huh?



NEAR AS WE
FIGURED, SHE EMPTIED
SEVEN CANS OF EXTRA-
STRENGTH BUG SPRAY
IN AN ENCLOSED
SPACE.

SCRATCHED
HERSELF UP
PRETTY BAD, TOO.
POISON LEECHED
INTO HER BLOOD-
STREAM AN' SHE WENT
TOXIC. CHRIST, SHE
EVEN SPRAYED THE
CRAP INTO HER
MOUTH.

GORDON
TOOK A PEEK
THROUGH HER
DIARIES. SHE HAD
SOME OBSESSION WITH
CLEANLINESS. LIVED IN
MORTAL FEAR OF
GERMS AND BUGS
AND CRAP.

AIN'T
THAT A HOOT?
PROBABLY THE ONLY
APARTMENT IN NEW
YORK THAT **DOESN'T**
HAVE ROACHES, AND
SHE OFFS HERSELF
BATTLING
IMAGINARY
BUGS.

Oh,
YEAH. A
REGULAR
RIOT.



CHRIST...
WHO CRAPPED
IN *YOUR* COFFEE?
FOR A COUPLA
THIRD-RATE DICKS
WHO JUST MADE
THEIR CAREERS,
YOU DON'T
SOUND TOO
CHEERY.

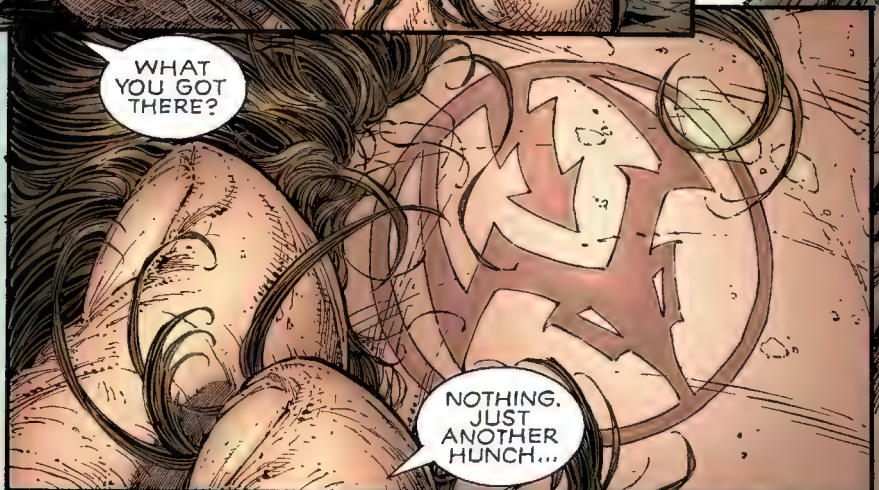
YEAH,
WELL, I
GUESS
**MULTIPLE
HOMICIDES**
JUST DON'T
CRACK ME UP
THE WAY
THEY USED
TO.



YER
BREAKIN' MY
HEART, OLD
FRIEND.

MIND IF
I TAKE A
LOOK AT
SOME-
THING?

SURE.
BE MY
GUEST.



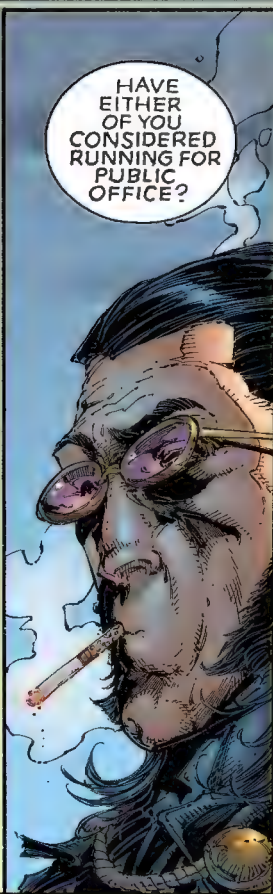
WHAT
YOU GOT
THERE?

NOTHING.
JUST
ANOTHER
HUNCH...





DO YOU
FEEL THE
MAYOR IS
DOING ENOUGH
TO ADDRESS
THE ISSUE OF
HOMELESS-
NESS?



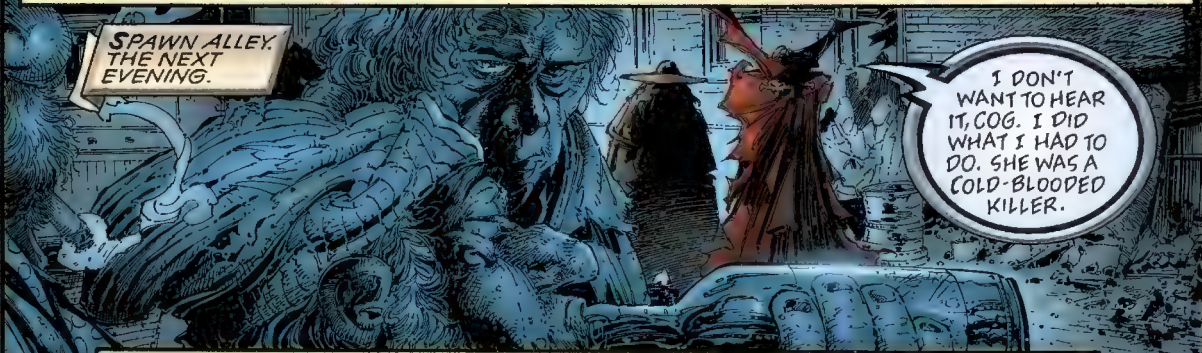
HAVE
EITHER
OF YOU
CONSIDERED
RUNNING FOR
PUBLIC
OFFICE?



WERE YOU
CONTACTED BY
AN OUTSIDE
PARTY TO LOOK
INTO THESE
MURDERS?



WHAT
ARE YOU
PLANNING
TO DO
NEXT?



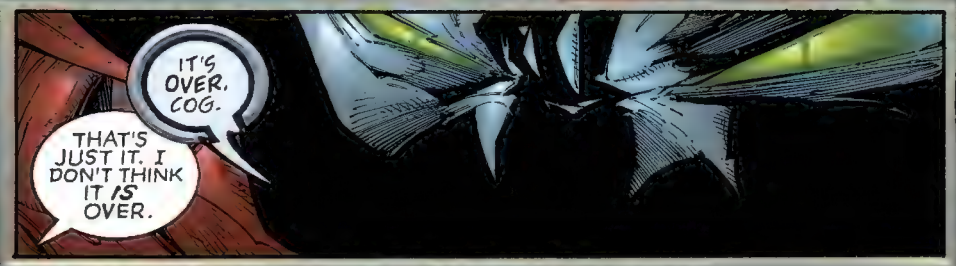
SPAWN ALLEY.
THE NEXT
EVENING.

I DON'T
WANT TO HEAR
IT, COG. I DID
WHAT I HAD TO
DO. SHE WAS A
COLD-BLOODED
KILLER.



I KNOW
YOU THINK
THAT. BUT
I BELIEVE
THERE'S
BIGGER
GOINGS-
ON.

I MANAGED
TO DECODE MORE
OF THE PASSAGE
ON THE STRANGE
MARKING YOU
SAW IN THE
MORGUE...



IT'S
OVER.
COG.

THAT'S
JUST IT. I
DON'T THINK
IT IS
OVER.

EPILOGUE.

" DETECTIVE DUO AWARDED COMMENDATION. PRIVATE INVESTIGATORS CITED BY MAYOR FOR CRACKING 'EXTERMINATOR' CASE..."

VERY, FLATTERING, SIR.

DON'T SELL YOURSELF SHORT, BUDDY. NOW, YOU KNOW WHAT THIS MEANS, DON'T YA?

YOU'RE RENEWING YOUR SUBSCRIPTION TO THE TIMES?

MEANS WE'RE **FINALLY** GOING SOMEWHERE. NO MORE NICKEL-AND-DIMIN' IT. WE'VE TURNED THE CORNER, BUDDY.

WE'RE GONNA BE THE TIFFANY'S OF DETECTIVE AGENCIES.

UPSCALE OFFICES... CELEBRITY CLIENTELE... PHAT ASSIGNMENTS...

"PHAT"?

YOU KNOW. COOL. EXCELLENT. SUPERLATIVE. IT'S WHAT ALL THE KIDS ARE SAYING THESE DAYS.

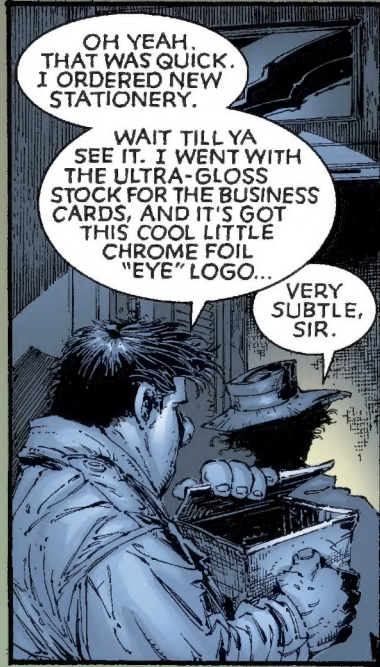
THAT DOESN'T MEAN YOU HAVE TO, SIR.



MAN, I
HOPE THEY GET
PACINO TO PLAY
ME IN THE
MOVIE.

MOVIE?
AREN'T YOU
GETTING A
LITTLE AHEAD
OF--

SIR, ARE WE
EXPECTING A
PACKAGE?



OH YEAH.
THAT WAS QUICK.
I ORDERED NEW
STATIONERY.

WAIT TILL YA
SEE IT. I WENT WITH
THE ULTRA-GLOSS
STOCK FOR THE BUSINESS
CARDS, AND IT'S GOT
THIS COOL LITTLE
CHROME FOIL
"EYE" LOGO...

VERY
SUBTLE,
SIR.



WELL,
HERE.
CHECK
IT OUT

FOR

YOUR--

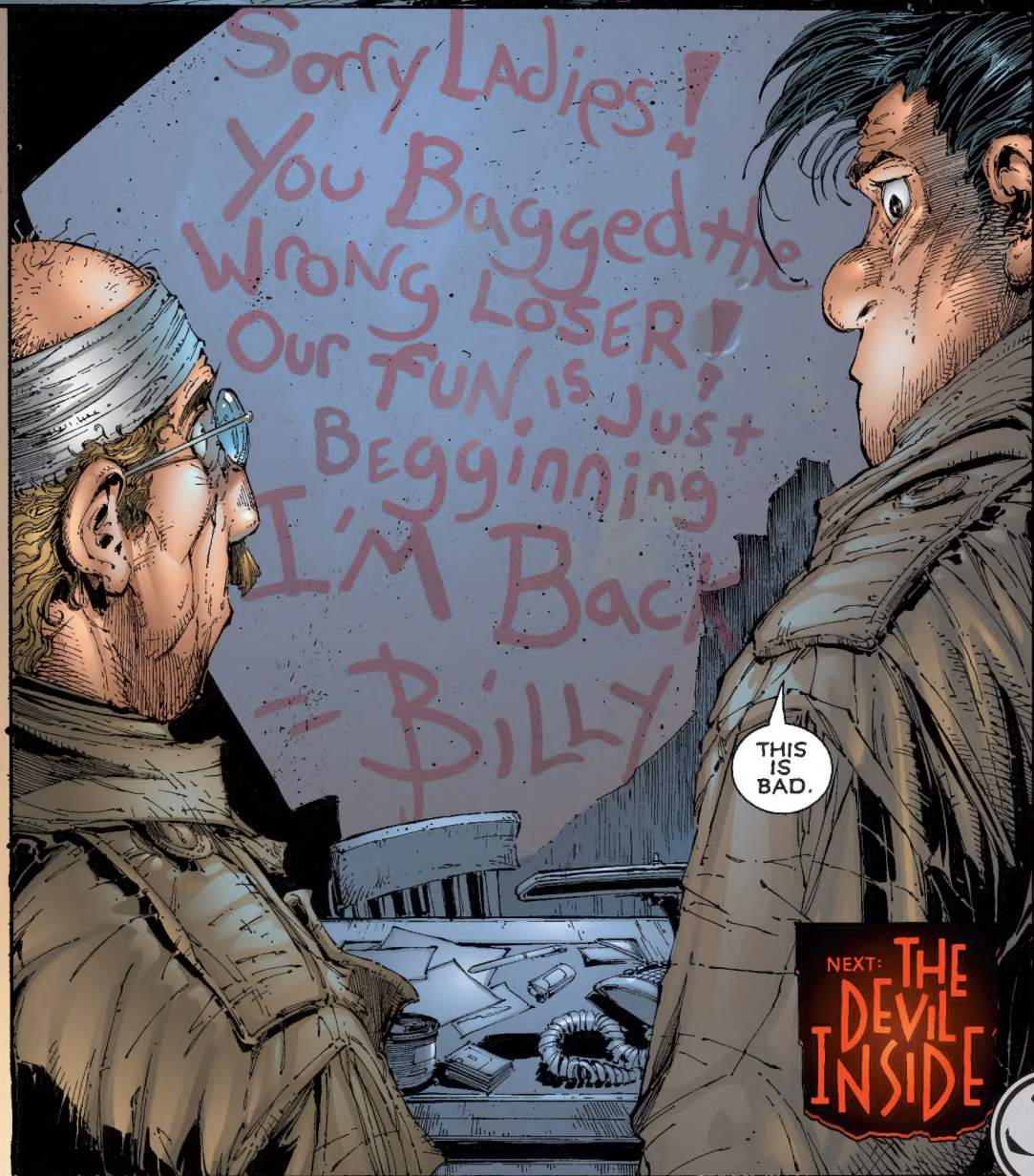


JEEZUS
FREAKIN'
CHRIST!



Uh... SIR...
LOOK.

WHAT
THE
HELL...





Tyrant
Lizard
King

EMPIRE